

Silence itself is a message. Martin Luther King, Jr. said famously, "In the end we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends." America has always been a friend to the oppressed, the persecuted, the forgotten. I pray our allegiance has not changed.

This administration must make the solid rock of freedom their foundation, rather than the sinking sand of repression.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, February 23, 2009.

Hon. HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON,
Secretary of State,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SECRETARY CLINTON: I write to share my dismay, also voiced by a number of leading human rights organizations, at your comments during your recent Asia trip indicating that human rights will not be a priority in your engagement with China. These statements come on the heels of the U.S. failing to participate in the United Nations review of the human rights record of China, among other worst offenders. Both are deeply troubling commentary on this administration's commitment to human rights, and are undoubtedly disheartening for scores of Chinese citizens, including the imprisoned Catholic bishops, persecuted house church leaders and repressed Tibetan Buddhists.

Certainly there is a place for pragmatism in diplomacy. It may be that the Chinese government, when confronted with its gross human rights violations, would dismiss U.S. concerns and tell us not to interfere in their "internal matters." But we need look no further than the Sharanskys and Solzhenitsyns of recent history to know that it is equally pragmatic to believe that bold, public proclamations on the importance of liberty, freedom, and the absence of repression are cause for great hope to those political prisoners who languish behind bars.

In short, words have power. They have the power to inspire, or deflate; they have the power to give vision or to stifle hope. But for words to inspire the hope for a day when the Chinese people can worship freely, where the press is not censored, where political dissent is permitted—they must first be spoken.

Silence is itself a message. Martin Luther King Jr. famously said, "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends." America has always been a friend to the oppressed, the persecuted, the forgotten. Has our allegiance changed?

Words are, of course, strengthened by policy, and policy is shaped by personnel. You have a number of important decisions before you in this regard: Will the new U.S. ambassador to China be singularly focused on good bilateral relations, and increased trade—or will that diplomat tirelessly work to ensure that our embassy is an island of freedom in a sea of repression? Will the assistant secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor be someone known and trusted by the human rights community? Will the new ambassador for International Religious Freedom worship with the underground church and press the Chinese government to respect this first freedom?

This administration is young and finding its sea legs. My hope is that the solid rock of freedom will be your foundation, rather than the sinking sand of repression.

I urge you to change course, lest this country itself be changed.

I am reminded of a story told by Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel which speaks to this very point: "One day a Tzadik came to

Sodom; He knew what Sodom was, so he came to save it from sin, from destruction. He preached to the people. 'Please do not be murderers, do not be thieves. Do not be silent and do not be indifferent.' He went on preaching day after day, maybe even picketing. But no one listened. He was not discouraged. He went on preaching for years. Finally someone asked him, 'Rabbi, why do you do that? Don't you see it is no use?' He said, 'I know it is of no use, but I must. And I will tell you why: in the beginning I thought I had to protest and to shout in order to change them. I have given up this hope. Now I know I must picket and scream and shout so that they should not change me.'"

Sincerely,

FRANK R. WOLF,
Member of Congress.

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SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

LORDS OF THE STREETS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I bring you news from the front. This week, in one of our neighboring country's schools, an elementary school, there was a raging gun battle for over 2 hours between the bad guys, the Army, and of course the police were involved in all of this. I'm not talking about a battle that took place in Iraq or Afghanistan. I'm talking about a battle that took place just south of our border in Mexico—the border, the second front that we should be concentrating on as a Nation and be concerned about what's taking place there. In Reynosa, Mexico, right across the Rio Grande River from McAllen, Texas, is where this gun battle took place.

The Gulf Drug Cartel, in control of Reynosa, was trying to move drugs into the United States, and they got involved with the Federal police and soldiers. This battle kept going on because both sides kept getting reinforcements. At least five of the gang members were killed and five peace officers, or Federal police, were killed. It is reported that teachers were shoving kids on the floor, blocking the windows with desks and tables, trying to keep down because of the ricochets that were taking place in the school.

One third grader said this: "We were all crying. We were so afraid," said this 9-year-old. She continued: "They could have killed every one of us."

The gun battle took place on both sides of the school. Then it moved into a shopping area and other parts of Reynosa.

The principal of the school had this comment. She said, "The bad men think they're lords of the streets." Mr. Speaker, maybe they are.

This is gang warfare in Mexico. Just last year, there were 6,000 people killed in Mexico, most of them attributed to the gang fights to try to control the drugs that are coming into the United States. Six thousand people? What does that mean? Well, there have been 5,000 Americans killed in Iraq and Afghanistan, less than the total number killed just last year in Mexico. It's reported that one American a week is killed in Mexico, maybe more than one a week. The drug cartels murder police officers; they kill elected officials; they chop the heads off of police chiefs; and some now have said that Mexico may be a failed state because of the drug cartels and the violence that is taking place there.

I don't know if it's a failed state or not, but it's a serious epidemic, and what is taking place that the drug cartels are in the center of this border war has to do with four commodities—with four commodities, Mr. Speaker. Two of those commodities go north, and two of those commodities go south. The drug cartels, of course, are running drugs and people into the United States. The two of those that are going south are the drug cartels that are helping to control, of course, the money and illegal guns going back into Mexico, most of those controlled by the drug cartels. We know that many of the drug cartels are working with the human smugglers, the coyotes, to have them bring drugs and people into the United States at the same time.

So the drug cartels are the enemy of America. They're working in Mexico. If anyone thinks that they're going to stay south of the Rio Grande River, they've not been very attune to what has taken place. Much of Mexico, especially on the border, has been corrupted by the drug cartels. It is extremely violent. I've been down to the Texas-Mexico border about 15 times, and every time I go, the situation is worse on both sides. Yet good folks on both sides live in fear because of the drug cartels and their violence, and nothing is happening.

President Calderon has answered with 40,000 soldiers on the border. He says, "Mexico confronts a historic challenge to become a secure country, a challenge to truly transform itself into a country of law and order."

Well, good for President Calderon. I hope he succeeds, but if we think it's going to stay south of the border, we're sadly mistaken.

Just in 2007, in my hometown of Houston, in broad daylight, two rival gangs, smuggling gangs, were going up and down the freeway, shooting at each other, trying to fight over a group of illegals that one of them wanted to take away from the other. You know, that case, like many others, has gone ignored mainly by the mainstream media.

This country, Mr. Speaker, faces a border war like we have never seen before, and so now I think we ought to take some action on this side of the